

- data identifying a characteristic of the customer to the processing station;
- at the processing station assigning a digitally accessible account to the customer;
 - digitally receiving the code and the data transmitted by the customer and without human intervention directing at least the data transmitted by the customer via the Internet to the account;
 - in the account storing a value assigned to the product or service;
 - repeating the steps of giving, transmitting the code via the Internet to the processing station, and digitally receiving and storing; and
 - permitting the customer via the Internet and without further human intervention to redeem accumulated values in the account and apply the redeemed accumulated values to at least one of a plurality of uses selected by the customer.

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concl.*

~~3~~
40. (new) A method according to claim ~~39~~¹ wherein the evidence is a receipt and including providing the customer with the receipt.

41. (new) A method according to claim ~~39~~ wherein the evidence is part of the product, and including the step of applying the code to the product so that ~~it~~ remains invisible to the customer until after the customer purchased the product.

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42. (new) A method according to claim ~~39~~¹ including the step of accessing the account at the station via the Internet and providing an account status update.

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